Michael Cleveland

- How it all began – Migel Library in 2013.
- Museum program with Michael Cleveland - A 1998 graduate of the Kentucky School for the Blind, Michael Cleveland is considered the best bluegrass fiddle player of his generation.
- Cleveland has released seven albums, won eleven fiddle player of the year awards, three bluegrass album of the year awards, three instrumental album of the year awards, and received a 2018 Grammy nomination.
- Program, But there was little information to add to the Migel when I wanted him to be represented. Should I buy one of Cleveland's CDs? If so, where do I stop?
- What did I already know? Anecdotally, I knew there were many musicians who were VI.
- Migel Collection showed obvious significance - Piano tuning and training in schools.

Coptics, Biwa and Kobzari

- Kobzari – 1500s. Blind Ukrainian minstrels. Organized into guilds. Soviets disbanded, but some interest lives on.
- Biwa hoshi – 1200s. Believed to originate with blind Buddhist Monks playing lutes in India during the first millennium.
- Cantors in the Egyptian Coptic church, orally transmitted hymns too complicated to transcribe. 1850s, but likely dates back to ancient Egypt. Used *chironomy hand movements as seen in hieroglyphs.*

No place else in the world?

- Music Librarians Association
- Smithsonian Folkways/Center for Folk Life
- Library of Congress Folk Life Collection – one vertical file folder on African American Musicians who were blind.

- Stevie Wonder’s Piano, 2014. At the museum. Could not ignore music

- H. W. Wilson Grant, 2015. $10,000 Grant

music, **WHY?**

In The Songs of Blind Folk, Terry Rowden states that “No role has been more strongly linked to disability than musicianship has to blindness.”

In his book The Blind Musician, Richard Fish asks “What is so special about blind musicians, and why are there so many prominent and talented ones throughout history?”

- **Memorization**. VI Rely on **auditory**, **tactile** *memorization* when playing
- No Sight Reading: without the ability to see and immediately play new music, or to see a conductor, the mind has to learn music in a unique way.
- Braille not always available, and keys, frets, etc. are not visible.
- Memorization may have lead to bards as far back as Homer, who was blind.

Science of Music and the Brain

- "*Early-blind* individuals have superior skills across a variety of brain processes." called Cross-Modal plasticity.
- MRIs show that EB individuals recruit more parts, different parts of the brain.
- **Blind Blues as an example:**
- **Almost universal birth into poverty. Conditions of poverty lead to -**
- **Lead to very early blindness.**
- **Making a living one of the few ways they could.**

Music has always played a significant role in the education of people who are blind and visually impaired. (MH)

- Even though early educators at American schools for the blind knew the popular belief that somehow all blind people were gifted musicians was untrue, they strongly supported musical training for *all* students.
- Samuel Gridley Howe, founding director of the Perkins School wrote in 1833, “Music is the field which seems to offer to the blind the fairest opportunity for competition with [the sighted]… Experience has fully confirmed that music must be the branch most sedulously cultivated, as being the one which would most certainly enable the pupils to earn a living.”
- Schools for the blind across the nation offered music instruction ranging from piano tuning to harmony and voice. As a result of this push, many blind and visually impaired students moved on to make a major impact on the history of the performing arts. As recording technologies began to appear in the early 20th century, the more successful blind musicians found their way into studios. For some, like Blind Willie Johnson, only a few recordings were made and their music is a historical footnote. Others became international superstars including Ray Charles, George Shearing, and Stevie wonder.

collection

- 121 Artists
- 343 albums

- migellibraryblindmusicians
- https://open.spotify.com/user/migellibraryblindmusicians/playlist/7uyO8qhZzWVPKWtvZWOzfJ

Moondog

- Street musician from the 40s to the 70s.
- Invented instruments and Viking persona.
- Influenced by the sounds of the streets.
- Began to release records on jazz labels.
- Toured the world.
- Moved to Germany in 1974, and composed music of a more classical nature.

Blind Tom Wiggins

- Would likely be diagnosed as an “autistic savant” today.
- Listened to the children of his slave-owners practice piano, and could play the compositions the first time he was exposed to a keyboard.
- Was “hired out” and separated from his family to tour and perform.
- Performed for President Buchanan and became famous.
- Knew 7,000 compositions, and performed 100s of his own.
- Performed until his 50s, when he passed away.